

## A Prophet's Prayer

Text : **Habakkuk 3 1-2** ( Read Chapter )

### INTRODUCTION :

**A. We have looked at prayer from several perspectives :**

1. General instructions for our private prayers.
2. An example of a prayer which Jesus prayed.
3. The way we should word public prayers.

**B. This lesson will examine a public prayer written by a prophet of God.**

1. It is a product of inspiration.
2. Thus, it is intended to be repeated.

**C. It is a Psalm to be used in worship. ( sung )**

1. Vs. **19b- For the choir director, on my stringed instruments.**
2. It is said to be in the style of “**Shigionoth.**”
  - a. The lexicon defines “**Shigionoth**” as a wildly exciting song of victory.
  - b. This same style is used in the **7<sup>th</sup> Psalm.**
  - c. Though the precise meaning is unclear, we know it is an exuberant musical style.
3. The use of “**selah**” also indicates it is a psalm.
  - a. Vss. **3, 9, 13**
  - b. Selah is musical instruction indicating a pause.
  - c. Comparable to a “rest” in modern music.

**D. This is a prayer uttered by a prophet performing an official function of his office.**

1. It was a prayer for all of the people of Israel.
2. Leaders in the early church also prayed for God people. ( *All Christians are priests.* )
  - a. Paul prayed for the churches every day. ( **Eph. 1: 16 - cf - all churches** )
  - b. Epaphrus “**labored**” in prayer for the Colossian church. ( **Col. 4: 12** )

\* **When praying it's irrational for us to expect extraordinary things from God without our putting forth an extraordinary effort to bring them about.**

- **Expect extraordinary things from God and then attempt great things for God.**

**Remember ... Eph. 3:20 “power that works within us” ( sowing = reaping )**
3. This prayer is an example for all Christians, especially church leaders today.
  - a. Widows ... **I Tim. 5: 5** ( **a definition of faithfulness for all Christians** )
  - b. Elders ... **James 5: 14-16**

**This written prayer is an example for each one of us in at least 4 ways.  
We will pay particular attention to the first two verses.**

### **I. Habakkuk approached God in faith.**

#### **A. The prophet saw a horrible future for Israel.**

1. God showed him that the Chaldeans were going to destroy and capture them.
2. The prophet knew what he had seen would really come to pass.
3. He knew God's judgment was just, but pleaded for mercy.

#### **B. God wants men's hearts, NOT just external compliance.**

1. Israel's heart had turned from God.
2. Their worship was nothing more than empty rituals.
3. They were just going through the motions. (**fulfilling requirements**)
  - a. **Remember Jesus :** **Matt. 15: 8-** This people honors Me with their lips,  
But their heart is far away from Me.
  - b. He is quoting **Isa. 29: 13**
  - c. Thus, this was a longstanding problem with the Jews **and with many today.**

#### **C. Nothing reveals one's faith as much as his prayer life.**

1. Prayer is an exercise in faith ... not a ritual.  
**James 1: 6-7** But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind.  
**7** For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord,
2. One who prays without faith might as well save his breath, but the prayer of faith ...  
**Phil. 4: 6-7** Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. **7** **And** the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (**faith trusts God**)
3. In this prayer he turns his eyes from the circumstances and trusts God's mercy.
  - a. He wrote a psalm of ultimate deliverance, (**a "Shigionoth"**.)
  - b. He prays their faith will remain strong enough to survive.  
**Hab. 2:4-** Behold, as for the proud one, His soul is not right within him;  
But the righteous will live by his faith.
  - c. Their deliverance depended upon their having faith in God and calling to Him.

## II. Habakkuk approached God mindful of His history with man.

### A. Vs. 2- Lord, I have heard the report about You and I fear.

1. The scriptures give us a record of God's dealings with man.
2. He has always been totally consistent. **Man knows what to expect.**

### B. God has always dealt with man on the basis of man's attitude toward HIS WORD.

1. God is the sovereign ruler of His universe.
2. He has exercised His authority throughout the ages.
  - a. **Dan. 2:21**- It is He who changes the times and the epochs; He removes kings and establishes kings; He gives wisdom to wise men And knowledge to men of understanding. ( cf- **3: 17 , 4: 25 , 5: 21** )
  - b. **Acts 17: 26** - He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation,

### C. Men maintain their place in the world by humbling their hearts before God.

1. **Psa. 51: 16-17** For You do not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it; You are not pleased with burnt offering. **17** The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.
2. Israel was about to lose their independence because they were not obeying God.
  - a. **Hab. 1: 5** - Look among the nations! Observe! Be astonished! Wonder! Because I am doing something in your days— You would not believe if you were told.
  - b. Man does not understand the providence of God, but it is always at work.
3. God remains consistent. ( *To Him all time is now.* )
  - a. Even today God judges the hearts of men. ( **motives, not individual actions** )
  - b. **I Cor. 4: 5**- ... wait until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts; ...

### D. Relationship with God has always been predicated upon obedience to HIS word.

1. **Prov. 28:9**- He who turns away his ear from listening to the law, Even his prayer is an abomination.
2. **Isa. 59: 1-2** Behold, the Lord's hand is not so short That it cannot save; Nor is His ear so dull That it cannot hear. **2** But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, And your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear.
3. **Matt. 7:21**- Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of Heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in Heaven will enter.

### III. Habakkuk approached God in fear.

- A. Vs. 2 ( We have free access, but **NOT**... “*Yooo Jesus, what’s up ?*” )
- B. The sovereign God wants men to “fear” Him.
- Exod. 20: 20-** Moses said to the people, “Do not be afraid; for God has come in order to test you, and in order that the fear of Him may remain with you, so that you may not sin.”
    - The result of “fear” is obedience.
    - The fear God wants is not that men be afraid of Him. ( **afraid = only comply** )
  - Those who “fear” God respect, honor and obey Him from the heart.
    - Lexicon : yaw·ray = reverence, honour, respect.
    - Josh. 24: 14-** Now, therefore, fear the Lord and serve Him in sincerity and truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord.
- C. Americans do not like to “fear” anyone.
- It is hard for us to bow before anyone. ( **We fire our leaders if ...** )
    - \* **Many considered it an insult when our President bowed before the Saudi King.**
  - Consequently, many pay lip-service to God’s sovereignty, **but** often find it difficult to surrender control of their lives to Him.
- D. We must acknowledge that our destiny is totally in the hands of God.
- Personally
  - Nationally
  - As a congregation
    - We must labor, but it is God who gives the increase. **I Cor. 3: 6**
    - God can remove a congregation’s lampstand. **Rev. 2 :5** ( **no longer His light** )
- E. None are too small to be elevated by God or too large to be brought down.
- Heb. 10: 30-** The Lord will judge His people. ( **John 15 ... He also prunes.** )
  - Therefore, the most basic of all wisdom is to fear God.
    - Proverbs 1: 7-** The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and instruction.
    - Proverbs 3: 7-** Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the Lord and turn away from evil.

**IV. Habakkuk approached God seeking revival.****A. The prophet accepted that the judgment was coming and that it was just.**

1. Vs. 2 ... He prays for mercy in the coming judgment.
2. His prayer is like that of the psalmist, Asaph.
  - a. **Psa. 80: 19-** O Lord God of hosts, restore us; Cause Your face to shine upon us, and we will be saved.
  - b. **Psa. 138: 7-** Though I walk in the midst of trouble, You will revive me; You will stretch forth Your hand against the wrath of my enemies, And Your right hand will save me.

**B. Habakkuk calls for revival, NOT salvation in their sins.**

1. **Ezra 9: 8-9** But now for a brief moment grace has been shown from the Lord our God, to leave us an escaped remnant and to give us a peg in His holy place, that our God may enlighten our eyes and grant us a little reviving in our bondage. **9** For we are slaves; yet in our bondage our God has not forsaken us, but has extended loving-kindness to us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to give us reviving to raise up the house of our God, to restore its ruins and to give us a wall in Judah and Jerusalem.
2. Thus, he prayed that their faith would be rekindled, even if it took bondage to do it.

**C. If Israel had perished in the captivity, there would be no Christ / salvation.**

**If the church is destroyed in this wicked age, there can be no salvation.**

1. Great churches have failed and God's light has gone out in those places.
  - a. ALL of the churches mentioned in the New Testament were lost to the world.
  - b. Today, 4 congregations in this area are about to close their doors.
2. **God will hold those responsible who caused their decline or let them perish. GOD ACCEPTS NO EXCUSES !!! He know the exact causes.**

**D. Our prayer must be for revival.**

1. **Psa. 85: 5-6** Will You be angry with us forever? Will You prolong Your anger to all generations? **6** Will You not Yourself revive us again, That Your people may rejoice in You?
2. When we pray "*Hallowed be Thy name*" what are we **doing** to make it hallowed ?
3. We must recognize our need for revival and ACT ... NOT wait of others.
  - \* **We ( YOU & I ) are the "they" in ... "Why don't they do something?"**

**CONCLUSION :****A. God is patient, but there is a limit to His patience.**

1. He was patient with Israel until the promise was completed in them, then destruction.
2. When this life ends, we will all find ourselves standing before God.
  - a. There will be no excuses.
  - b. Every thought, word or deed will be open before Him.

**B. God desires to have our hearts humbled in serve to Him.**

1. He pleads with us as He did with the 7 churches of Asian to turn back to Him.
2. All 7 of them are gone and their members have gone before God's judgment seat.
3. God makes the same plea to us that He made to the church in Laodicea.

**Rev. 3: 20-** Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me.

**C. The book of Lamentations ( esp .. 4: 1-12 ) tells of Israel's fate.**

1. Revival came too late for them to avoid captivity.
2. We still have time opportunity.
3. Let us make revival the passion of our prayers and of our lives.
4. Revival comes from within, **not** without.
5. **It starts with YOUR heart and with mine.**  
**When God has our hearts, our bodies will follow.**

**D. There is much we can do - IF - we will but place our faith in God and put our shoulders to His yoke.****INVITATION :**

**Right now .. Jesus stands knocking at the door of your heart.**